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Housekeepers' Chat

Thursday, August 7, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Concerning Porches." Recipes from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Selection of Cotton Fabrics."

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Summer-time is porch time, isn't it? We have a big screened side porch opening off the living room. As soon as spring comes, I begin to plan how I will use the porch for the summer. I don't happen to have any regular porch furniture -- just a lot of time-worn wicker furniture that has been stained and varnished again and again and made to do duty in the living-room. Some day, as I tell Uncle Ebenezer, I'm going to have a whole new living-room set. (What I mean is spelled s-u-i-t-e, and the French pronounce it "sweet" but the furniture dealers call it a "suit," and I prefer to talk about a "set." Take your choice.) Well, whenever I get my set, or suit, or suite, the wicker furniture will become the porch furniture; but in the meantime, it's moved out every May, and in every October, and in and out when it rains, or when people insist on sitting inside.

So much for the nucleus of our porch fixings. This spring I found a good many things had grown pretty shabby. Here's how I freshened them up, without spending very much money.

The couch swing was the worst. The khaki covering was stained and dingy, but I did not want to have the couch all done over. I found a remnant of heavy cretonne, with a jade-green background, and gay flowers in orange and blue and lavender -- all colors that would harmonize with other furnishings, and with summer bouquets. For the mattress of the couch swing, I made a cover with pleated side pieces reaching nearly to the floor. I tied the cover, by means of tapes, to the mattress buttons underneath. For the canvas ends of the swing I made slip covers, too.

Some of the same cretonne was used to cover the cushions of the four wicker chairs and the seat that matches them, and I had enough left for three cushions to tuck in among other gay porch pillows.

We have room at the other end of our porch for a cot with springs, which we find invaluable, for use as a day-bed. A cover of monk's cloth makes it into a comfortable couch, stacked with pillows with bright covers of materials which will stand a little careless handling. As often as not they are used on the floor or steps. When somebody wants to take a summer afternoon nap, this end of the porch can be screened off, and on a very hot night

it's the coolest place in the house to sleep. One summer when Billy was laid up with a broken leg, he spent almost the whole summer on this couch.

I bought four of the inexpensive chairs that come unfinished, and painted them a beautiful jade green to harmonize with the cretonne. I also painted the legs and the edges of a folding card table green. I have two green covers for it, so there's always a clean one on hand. Some people prefer oilcloth for porch use and for card tables. We use the table for just about everything -- for games, for afternoon tea, for meals if there are only four of us; for cutting out patterns and other dressmaking needs, for letter-writing, and, if it's too sunny on my work porch to be comfortable, for shelling peas or fixing other vegetables.

Of course I have some ferns and other potted plants about, and a rack for the magazines that seem to accumulate so fast. Around a little jog in the wall I have some shelves where I keep extra vases, and a dust brush and duster (in a concealing box) to take up scraps and make sure chairs are clean enough to sit on.

I used to laugh at the elaborate crocheted things people often have on the backs of their porch chairs in the country, thinking it was a frightful waste of time to do all that work on mere "tidies," as Uncle Ebenezer calls them. But I found out a long time ago that it's a good idea to cover chair backs and seats on porches in some way so as to protect light dresses and summer suits. Personally, I find tie-on covers of cretonne or washable fabrics easy to make and keep clean.

If I have any amount of summer sewing to do I move my sewing machine down-stairs to the living-porch. It is just another table when it's closed, and by having it there I am able to take advantage of an odd morning or afternoon hour without going upstairs where I can't hear the door-bell because of the hum of the machine. I love to sew out of doors, don't you? Where I can look up once in a while and enjoy my surroundings.

We have a work porch back of the kitchen, too, which is fixed up, as one might say, chiefly for business purposes. I have a worktable out there and can sit down and string beans or peel potatoes in comfort. There's a folding shelf that I use for arranging flowers, for spreading out foods to cool, and for receiving groceries and supplies.

Our sleeping porch is over the large living porch, and we all sleep there in hot weather. A curtain can be arranged to divide the sleeping porch into two parts. I use cretonne bed covers, with a great deal of black in the material, because out-of-doors beds are found to suffer from dust blown over them. Drop curtains and screens are a necessity on most sleeping porches, and for some exposures, awnings; but very little other furnishings is needed.

I've certainly talked longer than I meant to about porches. By the way, it's a good idea to have water-proof covers for beds, for sudden rains come up, perhaps when one is away from the house, and everything may be drenched. That's one reason for trying to fix the porch up as inexpensively as possible.

We have a great many porch suppers with our friends. I have evolved almost a standard menu for these little supper parties. Perhaps you would

like to have it: A salad -- hard-cooked egg, salmon, tuna fish, fruit, or, on special occasions, chicken; thin buttered bread, or sandwiches if anyone will make them for me; a fruit drink or iced tea; cake or cookies. Ice cream, of course, may be added as a little surprise once in a while, or a fruit short cake, easily made with whipped cream and whatever fruit is obtainable.

To make hard-cooked egg salad: Allow one or one and a half hard-cooked eggs to each person. Cut each egg lengthwise into about six pieces, and arrange on lettuce, on individual plates, in the form of a daisy, with yellow mayonnaise in the center. Or cut the eggs in halves lengthwise, and "devil the yolks by mixing them with seasonings to taste -- mustard, cayenne or tobacco, salt, vinegar, and mayonnaise. Pack neatly back into the whites and arrange on lettuce. Everybody is sure to like this salad, made either way. If you'd rather serve chicken salad, however, you will find a recipe in the Radio Cookbook. Or you can have any combination of raw vegetables in salad that may appeal to you.

The program tomorrow will be on canning -- in particular, how to can corn.

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